



Media Attitudes to Gaelic – Research project for Gaelic Language Board 2011

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Appraisal of Written Media Attitudes to Gaelic: Final Report

Prepared for: Bòrd na Gàidhlig

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Executive Summary

Objective

This research examined attitudes to Gaelic in the written media, in order to identify patterns, both negative and positive where they might exist. Four hundred and seventeen articles which appeared in the written media between January 2009 and March 2011 were examined from 42 publications.

These articles were categorised under five headings:

‘Positive’ - reporting in a positive manner on an issue regarding the language, culture or development of either.

‘Positive but critical’ - where the author was clearly sympathetic to the issue, but might be critical of how a particular policy, for instance, might be being developed.

‘Neutral’ - where a newspaper was genuinely and fairly reporting a relevant issue from an impartial point of view, allowing the reader to make their own independent judgement

‘Ambiguous’ - where at first glance, neutrality might be assumed, but where further investigation suggested a choice of angle, headline, or treatment was being adopted which ‘coloured’ the final presentation

‘Negative’ - where the attitude displayed towards the Gaelic language, culture or its development was clearly negative.

Results

Frequency of reporting on Gaelic related issues in the press

The top six publications consulted, which regularly reported on Gaelic in this period were (in order of frequency): The Scotsman (84 instances), Press and Journal (81), West Highland Free Press (72), The Herald (29), Edinburgh Evening News (16) and John O’Groat Journal (14)

Attitudes

Over this period, general attitudes to Gaelic were overwhelmingly positive, with 288 articles either positive (238 instances) or positive but critical (50). Thirty nine articles were neutral, and only 91 articles were either ambiguous (39) or clearly negative (52). This is a clear success story in terms of perception of Gaelic

by the written media, with positive attitudes outweighing negative reporting by a factor of over four to one.

Twenty six themes emerged in the treatment of Gaelic in the press. (see page 14)

Positive themes in terms of their ranking in the written media

The top six positive themes covered by the press were (in descending order): Education (97 instances), Gaelic culture in general (63), Gaelic as a resource (55), Specific individuals (52), Art/music/ poetry (50) and Gaelic in the media (e.g. BBC Alba etc) (28)

Positive but critical themes in terms of their ranking in the press

The top six themes covered by the press in a positive albeit critical way were (in descending order): Education (20 instances), Gaelic as a resource (19), Gaelic language resources (17), Bòrd na Gàidhlig (10), the cognitive benefits of bilingualism (9) and Gaelic in the media (8)

Themes treated in a neutral manner in the press

The top six themes covered by the press in a neutral manner were (in descending order): Education (22 instances), Cost (13), Gaelic as a resource (12), Road or other signage (8), Bòrd na Gàidhlig (6), and Gaelic culture in general (5)

Themes treated in an ambiguous manner in the press

The top six themes treated in this way were (in descending order): Education (16 instances), Cost (15), Road or other signage (13), Gaelic as a resource (12), Gaelic being 'unfairly promoted' (8) and how 'local' Gaelic is/was (6)

Negative themes in the press

The top six themes treated in a negative manner were (in descending order): Cost (31 instances), Education (16), Gaelic as a resources (15), Road or other signage (13), The number of speakers (13) and the media (12).

Press sources consistent in their treatment

The top three sources of consistently positive treatment in the press:

Of those sources that had six or more references to Gaelic over this period, the top three sources in terms of positive reporting were:

Stornoway Gazette	94% (of 15 instances)
The Herald	76% (of 29)
Scotsman	66% (of 84)

The top three sources of consistently negative treatment in the press:

Of those sources that had six or more references to Gaelic over this period, the top three sources in terms of negative reporting were:

Daily Express	85% (of 7 instances)
John 'O Groat Journal	35% (of 14)
Edinburgh Evening News	31% (of 16)

Issues of interest to the press irrespective of attitude

Different themes could be seen to be given different rankings of importance (in terms of their frequency of appearance) by newspapers holding different general attitudes towards Gaelic. Within this, of the 26 themes which emerged, 8 tended to appear more often than others irrespective of the attitude of the source. These were: Education; Culture, Cost; Gaelic as a resource; Road or other signage; Gaelic in the media; Bòrd na Gàidhlig and number of speakers. Table 1 below shows the importance (in terms of mentions) given to these themes from press sources holding different attitudes towards Gaelic. This is also shown in wider context in Table 9.

Table 1 – Importance of each theme according to press attitude

Theme	Positive mentions	Positive but critical	Neutral	Ambiguous	Negative
Education	97 instances	20	22	16	16
Culture	63	6	5	5	2
Cost	23	7	13	15	31
Gaelic as resource	55	19	12	12	15
Road or other signage	11	1	8	13	13
Gaelic in the media	28	8	5	3	12
Bòrd na Gàidhlig	24	10	6	4	7
Number of speakers	23	7	4	3	13

Section 1. General findings

Objective

This research examined attitudes to Gaelic in the written media, in order to identify patterns, both negative and positive, where they exist, and sought to consider the implications of such attitudes if they approached issues covered by equality legislation.

Goals

In aiming to ascertain how extensive and in what contexts any prejudice against Gaelic in the media was discernible, the research aimed to:

- Identify the treatment of Gaelic in the local and national Scottish press, including publications printed in England that have a substantial Scottish readership.
- Identify any variations in on-line treatment of Gaelic in the Press (e.g. through on-line press forums etc)
- Build a typology of arguments positive and negative used consistently within the written media
- Identify whether these arguments are generalized or limited to consistently identifiable sources
- Identify any location specific arguments that may be commonly used
- Identify any changes over time in the argumentation used
- Identify any variations between coverage in the printed press and on-line forums associated with this
- Conduct semi-structured telephone interviews with selected representatives of regulatory bodies, such as the PCC, the Society of Editors and the NUJ in order to gauge implications of such practice in the view of those organizations.

Methodology

The research team undertook a wide ranging search of references to Gaelic within on-line resources (such as Proquest UK Newspapers, Lexis Nexis etc). In addition to this there was analysis undertaken of the general Gaelic coverage held in the Fàs database (based on the Iomairtean Gàidhlig mailing list) which helped underpin the data found within the general newspaper on-line resources consulted.

This very rich and wide ranging material was then entered within a specially constructed and customised database which allowed the identification of any emerging themes, and sources of such themes; editorial stances; and the identification of prominent columnists associated with such approaches, where applicable. Details of dates of publication, and geographical location were also captured in case patterns emerged based upon those categories.

Categorisations adopted.

After discussions within the research team, it was decided that a five-fold categorisation of general attitudes should be adopted as a first approach, which would allow an identification of a spectrum of views ranging from clearly positive to clearly negative attitudes, but would also seek to differentiate between 'constructive' criticism and destructive or negative criticism. The research team also sought to differentiate between the editorial stance of a newspaper and the substance of a story - allowing for instance differentiation between a broadly 'neutral' report of a perhaps 'bad news' story in relation to Gaelic development, and an 'editorially negative' report of the same issues. Similarly where there was 'ambiguity' in the editorial stance, this was also noted.

The categorisations adopted for the above were therefore:

'Positive'

This category was used where the newspaper was reporting in a positive manner on an issue regarding Gaelic language, culture or development.

'Positive but Critical'

This category which was often found in Gaelic language columns in for instance, the Scotsman or West Highland Free Press refers to articles where the author is clearly sympathetic to Gaelic as such, but may be critical of how it is being developed - such as a particular policy from Bòrd na Gàidhlig, or aspects of Gaelic Medium Education or BBC Alba.

'Neutral'

This category was used when it was felt the newspaper was genuinely reporting on an area, where different views were held, in an impartial manner, which allowed the voicing of more than one perspective, thus enabling the readers to make their own judgement on the issues.

'Ambiguous'

This category was used when at first glance the newspaper might be thought to be adopting a 'neutral' stance - by reporting on both sides of a disagreement, for instance, but where the headlines, or particular choice of commentators on the issue, or choice of words, would suggest some ambiguity in the editorial approach being adopted.

'Negative'

This category was used, when the language chosen, editorial angle adopted by the paper, or the author of the piece, clearly displayed negative views about Gaelic language, culture or development in general.

Range of Data collected.

The decision was taken to start the data collection from the first of January 2009, and move to the present day (end date 1st of March 2011), in order to allow a chronological period of over two years, which would cover some key developing issues within the Gaelic world, including the progress of the Bòrd na Gàidhlig, the development of Language Plans, implementation of bi-lingual road signage, and on-going developments in Gaelic Medium Education, amongst other issues.

Drilling down within the data

Given the nature of the research approach - constructing data searches based on keywords such as 'Gaelic' 'Minority Language', 'Bilingual Education', 'minority culture' etc, the first dataset collected was extremely wide and varied - consisting of 966 reports over the two year period, relating to Gaelic language and some other minority languages (the word 'Gaelic' for instance picking up reference to Irish as well as Scottish Gaelic).

Given the on-line nature of the search much of the information understandably referred to on-line data (not the subject of this research) - such as reports from BBC Alba, or the on-line press, (the Caledonian Mercury for instance), or data which was related but not totally appropriate to the remit of this study (press releases and advertisements for instance). Often interesting (but not completely relevant) data was also picked up regarding other celtic minority languages such as Welsh, Manx, or Cornish. There was also frequent coverage of the Scots language (sometimes treated independently of Gaelic, and sometimes in comparison to it).

In focussing more closely on the remit of the study - ie the treatment of Gaelic within the printed press, the original dataset was made smaller by the omission of: 28 articles such as Parliamentary reports, Council reports, adverts, or where commentators had used the Gaelic language, but had not written about a subject relating to Gaelic development as such.

A further 191 articles were omitted as they references to essentially on-line materials (such as Gaelic related news from the BBC Gaelic website). Ninety-six press releases were also omitted (although like the other 'omitted' materials referenced directly above, these remain 'on-file' in case the progress of Gaelic reportage from raw press release to hard copy, was seen as important in specific cases, or might be seen as useful for further research).

In the first dataset, almost 90 letters to the press were present, on Gaelic related issues, but following the remit of the research, these were also omitted, as the interest was in views on Gaelic from established newspapers rather than the public. Again these remain on record for possible further research.

Finally, there were 148 references to other minority languages such as Irish, Cornish, Welsh, or indeed to the concept of teaching languages other than English - all of which might be argued to give some insights into newspapers' general attitudes towards 'non-English' language matters - however these were omitted again for clarity, although they remain on file for possible future use. In

relation to this last issue however, where there were references to Gaelic and other languages (such as a Gaelic/Scots comparison), this was kept within the slimmed down dataset.

This finally resulted in a dataset of 418 references over the period (including 53 in Gaelic themselves) which referred to Gaelic related issues and which could be found in the paper-based media from 42 publications.

A note on on-line forums

In a similar manner to the approach adopted towards letters within the press, although the research team had commenced by also considering on-line forums, in practice this was found to throw up very similar issues to those in the letter pages.

In addition, the fact that some forums were moderated (supervised) by newspapers, and others not, meant that this would have caused great difficulty in relating views in some of these forums to the standpoints of various printed media. In view of these difficulties it was decided not to proceed with this aspect of the investigation

Who writes about Gaelic?

The table below will illustrate the sources of the data collected over the two year period. Where there are obvious gaps, this is due to difficulties in searching relevant data electronically (such as for instance with the Oban Times). Despite the limitations this may have caused, we are nonetheless confident that the data captured is wide-ranging enough in its sources and in the themes picked up, to allow us to come to defensible conclusions about much of the treatment of Gaelic in the written media.

It can be seen from Table 2 that the papers which wrote most frequently about Gaelic were (in descending order) The Scotsman; The Press and Journal; The West Highland Free Press; The Herald; The (Edinburgh) Evening News; John O’Groat Journal; and the Times Educational Supplement, all of which had a dozen or more relevant references in this time period. The remaining sources had less than a dozen references.

Table 2 - Sources of all 418 articles by publication

Publication	Number of articles making reference to Gaelic	Publication	Number of articles making reference to Gaelic
Aberdeen Evening Express	1	John O'Groat Journal	14
Carlisle Gazette	1	Kirkcubrecht Herald	1
Cumnock Chronicle	1	Kirkcubrecht Herald	4
Daily Express	7	Lochaber News	2
Daily Mail	1	News of the World	1
Daily Record	5	Paisley Daily Express	2
Daily Telegraph	1	Press and Journal	81
Donside Today	1	Scotland on Sunday	3
Dumfries Standard	3	Scotsman	84
Dundee Courier	4	Scottish Review	1
Dunoon Observer	2	Stirling Observer	4
Edinburgh Evening News	16	Stornoway Gazette	15
Glasgow Evening Times	3	Sun	3
Glaswegian	1	Sunday Express	2
Guardian	7	Sunday Herald	3
Hebridean News	4	Sunday Mail	1
Herald	29	Sunday Times	6
Highland News	3	Times	4
Holyrood Magazine	2	Times Education Supplement	12
Independent	2	Times Higher Education Supplement	5
Inverness Courier	3	West Highland Free Press	72

Frequencies of attitudinal categories adopted by each source over this period

As indicated above, categories adopted were: 'Positive'; 'Positive but Critical'; 'Neutral'; 'Ambiguous' and 'Negative'.

For simplification, there may be some value in considering the first three categories as reporting good (or impartial) news about Gaelic, while the latter two categories could be seen as 'bad' news (an 'ambiguous' report rarely being 'positive')

Table 3 – Frequency of attitudinal categories adopted by each publication

Publication	Pos	Pos Crit	Neut	Am	Neg	Tot	Publication	Pos	Pos Crit	Neut	Am	Neg	Tot
Aberdeen Evening Express	-	-	-	-	1	1	John O'Groat Journal	3	-	1	5	5	14
Carlisle Gazette	-	1	-	-	-	1	Kirkcubrecht Herald	-	-	-	-	1	1
Cumnock Chronicle	1	-	-	-	-	1	Kirkcubrecht Herald	2	-	1	-	1	4
Daily Express	1	-	-	-	6	7	Lochaber News	1	-	1	-	-	2
Daily Mail	-	-	-	-	1	1	News of the World	-	-	-	-	1	1
Daily Record	2	-	-	-	3	5	Paisley Daily Express	2	-	-	-	-	2
Daily Telegraph	-	-	-	1	-	1	Press and Journals	47	5	7	15	8	82
Donside Today	1	-	-	-	-	1	Scotland on Sunday	2	-	-	1	-	3
Dumfries Standard	2	-	1	-	-	3	Scotsman	56	12	8	4	4	84
Dundee Courier	1	-	2	1	-	4	Scottish Review	-	-	-	-	1	1
Dunoon Observer	-	-	-	1	1	2	Stirling Observer	2	-	-	2	-	4
Edinburgh Evening News	3	1	6	1	5	16	Stornoway Gazette	14	1	-	-	-	15
Glasgow Evening Times	3	-	-	-	-	3	Sun	-	-	1	-	2	3
Glaswegian	1	-	-	-	-	1	Sunday Express	-	-	-	-	2	2
Guardian	4	-	1	-	2	7	Sunday Herald	-	-	2	-	1	3
Hebridean News	4	-	-	-	-	4	Sunday Mail	-	-	-	1	-	1
Herald	22	1	3	1	2	29	Sunday Times	1	-	1	1	3	6
Highland News	1	-	-	1	1	3	Times	2	1	-	1	-	4
Holyrood Magazine	2	-	-	-	-	2	Times Education Supplement	7	1	1	3	-	12
Independent	1	-	-	-	1	2	Times Higher Education Sup.	5	-	-	-	-	5
Inverness Courier	3	-	-	-	-	3	West Highland Free Press	42	27	3	-	-	72

In general the table above suggests a positive disposition across the printed media toward Gaelic from the majority of the press, with some notable exceptions (the Express group of newspapers, Edinburgh Evening News, and John O'Groat Journal).

While the Express group of newspapers tended to be negative irrespective of the theme raised, two locational specific issues might also be present. In the case of the Edinburgh Evening News it may be worth noting that in the period under

consideration, the issue of the costs of expanding Gaelic Medium Education (GME) within Edinburgh was (as it remains) a live issue.

In the case of the John O’Groat Journal, during the period under consideration, the issue of local bilingual signage in particular seem to have been made an issue of personal publicity by some of the councillors.

Of concern perhaps, in terms of mass market Scottish tabloids however, neither the Daily Record nor the Sun (despite the latter’s dabbling in Gaelic from time to time on its website) treat the language or culture positively in this period.

What were the issues/themes raised by newspapers reporting about Gaelic?

The approach adopted by this research was broadly ‘inductive’ - once the (wide) dataset had been gathered, each item was studied and the themes uncovered progressively catalogued, (and added to as examination of each article proceeded).

Categories based on these themes are shown below (in no particular order). Often more than one issue was raised in a Gaelic related article (e.g. Gaelic Medium Education was often raised in the context of cost or resources, or that of rights/ entitlement. Issues such as those of bilingual road and other signage, would often appear linked to themes of ‘how ‘local’ Gaelic is/was’, or of Gaelic being ‘unfairly promoted’.

Issues/themes as found in the written press:

Issues relating to Cost; Issues relating to resources; Issues relating to ‘language resources’; Issues relating to Bòrd na Gàidhlig; Issues relating to Education; Issues relating to ‘Culture’; Issues relating to ‘New Technology’; Issues relating to the Media; Issues relating to ‘comparisons’ of various types; Issues relating to rights/entitlements; Issues relating to how ‘local’ Gaelic is/was; Issues relating to road (or other) signage; Issues relating to Gaelic ‘unfairly promoted’; Issues relating to Gaelic underprivileged or under-promoted; Issues relating to language plans; Issues relating to Arts/Music/Poetry etc; Issues relating to Religion; Issues relating to economic impact or benefit; Issues relating to specific named individuals; Issues relating to ‘identity’; Issues relating to quality; Issues relative to the concept of a ‘Gaelic Mafia’; Issues relating to cognitive benefits; Issues relating to number of speakers; Issues relating to a ‘Modernist’ discourse (i.e. Gaelic is backward looking....); Issues relating to ‘community’.

Tables 4 - 9 below, illustrate the number of times the themes above, were raised in a ‘positive’; ‘positive but critical’; ‘neutral’; ‘ambiguous’ and ‘negative’ context. On most occasions a single article may refer to more than one theme – so the number of themes in the following tables will normally be in excess of the number of articles.

Table 4: Positive reporting (238 articles) - themes raised:

Issue	Mentions	Issue	Mentions
Issues relating to cost	23	Issues relating to Gaelic being underprivileged	11
Issues relating to resources	55	Issues relating to Language Plans	18
Issues relating to language resources	23	Issues relating to art/ music/ poetry etc	50
Issues relating to Bòrd na Gàidhlig	24	Issues relating to religion	4
Issues relating to education	97	Issues relating to economic benefit or impact	14
Issues relating to culture	63	Issues relating to specific individual(s)	52
Issues relating to the use of new technology	10	Issues relating to 'identity'	5
Issues relating to Gaelic in the media	28	Issues relating to 'quality' of Gaelic	5
Comparisons raised with treatment of other languages	10	Issues relating to the concept of a 'Gaelic Mafia'	-
Issues relating to rights/ entitlement	17	Issues relating to cognitive benefits	9
Issues relating to how 'local' Gaelic is/ was	5	Issues relating to the number of speakers	23
Issues relating to road (or other) bi-lingual signage	11	Issues related to the 'modernist' discourse	2
Issues relating to Gaelic 'unfairly promoted'	-	Issues relating to community	3

Table 5: 'Positive but Critical' reporting (50 articles) - themes raised:

Issue	Mentions	Issue	Mentions
Issues relating to cost	7	Issues relating to Gaelic being underprivileged	6
Issues relating to resources	19	Issues relating to Language Plans	3
Issues relating to language resources	17	Issues relating to art/ music/ poetry etc	2
Issues relating to Bòrd na Gàidhlig	10	Issues relating to religion	-
Issues relating to education	20	Issues relating to economic benefit or impact	2
Issues relating to culture	6	Issues relating to specific individual(s)	-
Issues relating to the use of new technology	-	Issues relating to 'identity'	-
Issues relating to Gaelic in the media	8	Issues relating to 'quality' of Gaelic	6
Comparisons raised with treatment of other languages	4	Issues relating to the concept of a 'Gaelic Mafia'	3
Issues relating to rights/ entitlement	3	Issues relating to cognitive benefits	-
Issues relating to how 'local' Gaelic is/ was	-	Issues relating to the number of speakers	7
Issues relating to road (or other) bi-lingual signage	1	Issues related to the 'modernist' discourse	-
Issues relating to Gaelic 'unfairly promoted'	2	Issues relating to community	2

Table 6: 'Neutral' reporting (39 articles) - themes raised

Issue	Mentions	Issue	Mentions
Issues relating to cost	13	Issues relating to Gaelic being underprivileged	3
Issues relating to resources	12	Issues relating to Language Plans	2
Issues relating to language resources	2	Issues relating to art/ music/ poetry etc	1
Issues relating to Bòrd na Gàidhlig	6	Issues relating to religion	1
Issues relating to education	22	Issues relating to economic benefit or impact	2
Issues relating to culture	5	Issues relating to specific individual(s)	3
Issues relating to the use of new technology	3	Issues relating to 'identity'	-
Issues relating to Gaelic in the media	5	Issues relating to 'quality' of Gaelic	2
Comparisons raised with treatment of other languages	3	Issues relating to the concept of a 'Gaelic Mafia'	1
Issues relating to rights/ entitlement	5	Issues relating to cognitive benefits	1
Issues relating to how 'local' Gaelic is/ was	2	Issues relating to the number of speakers	4
Issues relating to road (or other) bi-lingual signage	8	Issues related to the 'modernist' discourse	-
Issues relating to Gaelic 'unfairly promoted'	3	Issues relating to community	-

Table 7: ‘Ambiguous’ reporting (39 articles) - themes raised

Issue	Mentions	Issue	Mentions
Issues relating to cost	15	Issues relating to Gaelic being underprivileged	-
Issues relating to resources	12	Issues relating to Language Plans	2
Issues relating to language resources	1	Issues relating to art/ music/ poetry etc	-
Issues relating to Bòrd na Gàidhlig	4	Issues relating to religion	1
Issues relating to education	16	Issues relating to economic benefit or impact	-
Issues relating to culture	5	Issues relating to specific individual(s)	1
Issues relating to the use of new technology	1	Issues relating to ‘identity’	-
Issues relating to Gaelic in the media	3	Issues relating to ‘quality’ of Gaelic	1
Comparisons raised with treatment of other languages	3	Issues relating to the concept of a ‘Gaelic Mafia’	2
Issues relating to rights/ entitlement	5	Issues relating to cognitive benefits	1
Issues relating to how ‘local’ Gaelic is/ was	6	Issues relating to the number of speakers	3
Issues relating to road (or other) bi-lingual signage	13	Issues related to the ‘modernist’ discourse	1
Issues relating to Gaelic ‘unfairly promoted’	8	Issues relating to community	-

Table 8: Issues raised in a negative context (52 articles) – themes used

Issue	Mentions	Issue	Mentions
Issues relating to cost	31	Issues relating to Gaelic being underprivileged	-
Issues relating to resources	15	Issues relating to Language Plans	1
Issues relating to language resources	1	Issues relating to art/ music/ poetry etc	1
Issues relating to Bòrd na Gàidhlig	7	Issues relating to religion	-
Issues relating to education	16	Issues relating to economic benefit or impact	2
Issues relating to culture	2	Issues relating to specific individual(s)	-
Issues relating to the use of new technology	4	Issues relating to 'identity'	1
Issues relating to Gaelic in the media	12	Issues relating to 'quality' of Gaelic	-
Comparisons raised with treatment of other languages	-	Issues relating to the concept of a 'Gaelic Mafia'	4
Issues relating to rights/ entitlement	-	Issues relating to cognitive benefits	1
Issues relating to how 'local' Gaelic is/ was	4	Issues relating to the number of speakers	13
Issues relating to road (or other) bi-lingual signage	13	Issues related to the 'modernist' discourse	1
Issues relating to Gaelic 'unfairly promoted'	11	Issues relating to community	1

Table 9 – Comparative ranking in importance of themes of interest in the press.

Rank	Positives		Positive but critical		Neutrals		Ambiguous		Negatives	
1	Education	97	Education	20	Education	2	Education	16	Cost	31
2	Culture	63	Resource	19	Cost	2	Cost	15	Education	16
3	Resource	55	Language resources	17	Resource	3	Road or other signage	13	Resource	15
4	Specific Individuals	52	BnG	10	Road or other signage	2	Resource	12	Road or other signage	13
5	Art/ Music/ Poetry	50	Cognitive benefits	9	BnG	8	Gaelic 'unfairly promoted'	8	Number of speakers	13
6	Media	28	Media	8	Culture	5	How 'local' Gaelic is/was	6	Media	12
7	BnG	24	Cost	7	Media	5	Culture	5	Gaelic 'unfairly promoted'	11
8	Cost	23	Number of speakers	7	Rights/ Entitlement	4	Rights/ Entitlement	5	BnG	7
9	Language resources	23	Culture	6	Number of speakers	4	BnG	4	New Technology	4
10	Number of speakers	23	Gaelic 'underprivileged'	6	New Technology	3	Media	3	How 'local' Gaelic is/was	4
11	Language Plans	18	Quality of Gaelic	6	Gaelic 'unfairly promoted'	3	Comparisons	3	Gaelic 'mafia'	4
12	Rights/ Entitlement	17	Comparisons	4	Gaelic 'underprivileged'	3	Number of speakers	3	Culture	2
13	Economic benefit or impact	14	Rights/ Entitlement	3	Specific Individuals	3	Language Plans	2	Economic benefit or impact	2
14	Road or other signage	11	Language Plans	3	Language resources	2	Gaelic 'mafia'	2	Language resources	1
15	Gaelic 'underprivileged'	11	Gaelic 'mafia'	3	Comparisons	2	Language resources	1	Language Plans	1
16	New Technology	10	Gaelic 'unfairly promoted'	2	How 'local' Gaelic is/was	2	New Technology	1	Art/ Music/ Poetry	1
17	Comparisons	10	Art/ Music/ Poetry	2	Language Plans	2	Religion	1	Identity'	1
18	Cognitive benefits	9	Economic benefit or impact	2	Economic benefit or impact	2	Specific Individuals	1	Cognitive benefits	1
19	How 'local' Gaelic is/was	5	Community	2	Quality of Gaelic	2	Quality of Gaelic	1	'Modernist' discourse	1
20	Identity'	5	Road or other signage	1	Art/ Music/ Poetry	1	Cognitive benefits	1	Community	1
21	Quality of Gaelic	5	New Technology		Religion	1	'Modernist' discourse	1	Comparisons	
22	Religion	4	How 'local' Gaelic is/was		Gaelic 'mafia'	1	Gaelic 'underprivileged'		Rights/ Entitlement	
23	Community	3	Religion		Cognitive benefits	1	Art/ Music/ Poetry		Gaelic 'underprivileged'	
24	'Modernist' discourse	2	Specific Individuals		Identity'		Economic benefit or impact		Religion	
25	Gaelic 'unfairly promoted'		Identity'		'Modernist' discourse		Identity'		Specific Individuals	
26	Gaelic 'mafia'		'Modernist' discourse		Community		Community		Quality of Gaelic	

Colours above may help visualise the relative importance of eight prominent themes from different attitudinal approaches – Education; Culture; Cost; Gaelic as a Resource; Road or other signage; Gaelic in the media; Bòrd na Gàidhlig; and number of speakers

Section 2 – Some examples of typical coverage

This section illustrates some examples of the typical treatment of various themes, from different attitudinal perspectives. These short extracts allow the emergence of general standpoints to be seen

Section 3, (below) considers the issue of equality legislation, and Section 4, provides a more in depth case study of the issue of Gaelic and its role in the media.

Issues relating to education

This topic is ranked 1st in the 'positive/positive but critical/neutral categories, and 1st ambiguous, and 2nd in negative, clearly marking it out as a crucial area for discussion in the press, and one where polarised opinion exists.

Seen positively

The positive aspects of Gaelic related education (97 instances of this in the press) were often items of 'matter of fact' reporting. This might possibly mean that the press often reprinted press releases, or source material with little re-writing. Some typical examples of this might include the following two extracts:

Evening Times (Glasgow) January 5, 2009

*'Gaelic nursery opens to meet increasing demand;
Third unit brings number of places for kids in city to 120'
'A NEW unit has been opened in Glasgow to cope with the growing number of
nursery pupils learning Gaelic....'*

Evening News (Edinburgh) May 6, 2009

*'Read all about Gaelic library'
'NINA McCABE, eight, and Calum Smyth, nine, enjoy a Gaelic book at
Fountainbridge Library.
The pair were helping to launch Nead na Gàidhlig, a dedicated Gaelic children's
book collection and reading den. Hundreds of new children's books in Gaelic have
been added to the Central Children's Library and Fountainbridge Library, thanks to
a Bòrd na Gàidhlig grant award to the city's library service.'*

Seen negatively

In some cases negative reports clearly arose as part of what might be seen as the airing of legitimate concerns about the use of straitened resources in difficult

economic circumstances, or about standards – with newspapers raising these issues as a matter of public concern. Some typical examples are seen below:

Press and Journal 07/08/2010

'Proposals to teach pupils at Gaelic medium schools in smaller classes than the national maximum of 25 have been branded "unjustifiable and unfair".....'

Kirriemuir Herald 29/9/2010

Here the report talks of *'failings in the school's Gaelic unit....'*

In general the range of argumentation against the funding of GME was quite varied, although a substantial amount related to *costs*, to Gaelic's *relevance* today, and whether it had historical *legitimacy* locally.

Some of the reporting could come from an angle that emphasised cost, over the consideration of educational benefit e.g.

Edinburgh Evening News 13/12/2010

'The cost of Gaelic education in the Capital will increase by up to £4.3 million over the next eight years if council bosses choose to open a dedicated school, it emerged today.....'

Press and Journal 23/12/2010

'TRANSPORTING 27 pupils by taxi to Inverness's Gaelic Primary School will have cost nearly £120,000 by the end of the school year...'

This is at times mixed with an approach that implies a lack of historical 'legitimacy' in Gaelic communities who may expect Gaelic medium educational provision. i.e:

Edinburgh Evening News 9/6/2010

Their leader on Gaelic education claims :

'The city has no historic Gaelic culture'

And goes on to say :

.....'there is no shortage of education and business experts who would argue that learning Mandarin would be more useful than Gaelic..... While budget cuts force high schools and primaries across the city to reassess what they can do for their pupils, there seems little wisdom of setting up a Gaelic medium school in a city which has no historic Gaelic culture'.

This is sometimes mixed with the claim that Gaelic has no future:

Scotsman 19/4/2010

'... if Tollcross Primary is to get an extra £100,000 to expand its Gaelic teaching programme. I'm delighted that some people are prepared to keep it going for as long as they can.

The question is, should the rest of us now pay to broaden Gaelic out even further in a doomed attempt to revive it?'

Tabloids such as the Daily Express (which, together with the Sunday Express had the most consistent anti-Gaelic approach in all the papers studied) tended to be more dismissive, verging on the sensationalist at times:

Daily Express 31/8/2010

'FURY AT GAELIC DVDS FOR TOTS'

'THOUSANDS of pounds worth of taxpayers' money has been spent on DVDs that teach just 2,000 nursery schoolchildren to speak Gaelic.

.....but Matthew Elliott, chief executive of the Taxpayers' Alliance, said: "With money tight and a need to find cuts, project after project aimed at promoting Gaelic can't be the priority over essential services." '

Daily Express HICKEY Column 18/11/2010

'INTERESTINGLY, children taught Gaelic at sgoil (skool) are better at reading and riting English, a finding that has excited Mr Mike 'Horrible' Russell, edukashun gauleiter. I am not surprised as I suspect that 99 per cent of brats taught in Gaelic in Glascu come from middle-class parents who encourage their children in whatever they are taught, so it is because of parental influence rather than the liltin beauty of the lingo o' the Celtic Gods, or whatever is the latest claim for Gaelic.'

Daily Express Keith Aitken 18/11/2010

'Those of us who question the cost of keeping Gaelic on life-support are supposed to be cowed by a report showing pupils who receive Gaelic medium teaching do at least as well academically as their peers. But it merely confirms what studies all over the planet show about bilingual education. The outcome would be the same if we were teaching kids a language they could take out into the world and use'

Sunday Express 10/10/2010

'A SCHEME to give out thousands of Gaelic children's books to families that cannot read the language was branded a waste of money last night.'

This occasionally verges on the racist in papers such as the News of the World:

News of the World 21/11/2010

'NEW Edinburgh University study claims kids who go to Gaelic-only schools can converse perfectly well with kids who get a regular education.

Although the study did find the conversations are very short, usually just:

"Sorry, me no speakie English..." ' "

The John O'Groat Journal, although it does also cover Gaelic in a positive manner, gives a lot of coverage to some of the more publicly prominent anti-Gaelic campaigners such as Councillor John Rosie:

John O'Groat Journal 26/11/2010

'John Rosie and Donnie Mackay are 'appalled' by the reference within the job spec for the vacancies in two Thurso primaries.

Mr Rosie claims it echoes the need to have had party membership to get a job in pre-Second World War Germany.'

While the Sunday Herald and Herald family of newspapers are generally more positive to Gaelic on the whole (in total 28 reports in the positive/positive but critical/neutral camp as opposed to 4 in the ambiguous/negative camp within the 418 articles considered), columnists on occasion fire some shots at Gaelic issues:

Sunday Herald Roxanne Sorooshian 19/9/2010

'Nevertheless, Gaelic is rammed down our throats no matter how far we are from the Highland hinterland.....With schools closing across the country and minimum class-size targets failing to be met, surely we must question the worth of specialist schooling based on a dying language.'

Issues relating to culture

This is ranked 2nd in 'positive' sources showing its importance, with 'positive but critical' approaches ranking it 9th in terms of attention. For 'neutral' reportage it is 6th, while for 'ambiguous' it is 5th and for 'negatives' it is the lowest concern of the eight highlighted themes at 12th clearly suggesting it is one of the areas where there is less division and more unanimity across the attitudinal spectrum.

Seen positively:

A typical treatment of the positive aspects of Gaelic culture may be seen in the following report which stresses the benefits of diversity and makes urban/rural and historical links:

Evening Times (Glasgow) 29/09/ 2009

'GAEL FORCE IN THE WEST'

'It is a statistic which gives a sense of the West End's cultural diversity – the area has a higher concentration of Gaelic speakers than anywhere outside the Isle of Lewis.'

Thousands of expat Gaels live in the West End and there is a thriving scene of Gaelic associations and Highlanders' societies - along with the city council's Gaelic school which has pupils from nursery through to secondary.

The social centre of Gaelic life in Glasgow is the "teuchy triangle" at the western end of Argyle Street.

Traditional music attracts hordes of Highlanders, islanders and tourists to the Islay Inn, Park Bar, Ben Nevis and Snaffle Bit pubs.

In Partick the Lismore caters for a Highland clientele as does Oran Mor (Gaelic for big music) at the top of Byres Road.

The pubs are a reminder of the thousands of highlanders and islanders who flocked to the West End to make their homes after the Highland Clearances.

They found jobs in the shipyards of Govan and in particular Partick - and their culture lives on.

At Partick railway station, the signs are bilingual - Partaig in Gaelic.

The mother of Red Clydesider John Maclean was a victim of the Highland famine of the 1840s and walked to Glasgow from her home in Fort William.'

Seen negatively:

While Gaelic culture is not a theme that is at the top of the concerns of those negatively disposed towards the language, the themes of backwardness in the culture can be seen in the first of the extracts below, with the second complaining that Gaelic culture wasn't enough of a money spinner in relation to the Caithness mod.

The Scotsman 19/4/2010 (Helen Martin)

'It's all very sad but inevitable. Scottish Highlanders and islanders, just like the people of Maaloula, need inward investment, jobs, opportunities and careers.

Neither Gaelic nor Aramaic is going to be of much help in securing these unless there's a sudden boom in the traditional folk-singing industry.

Preserving Gaelic is highly emotive for the 1 per cent who speak it. Some people – and I'm one of them – like to pretend it is some kind of mother tongue and say "slainte" occasionally instead of "cheers" and feel a tickle of independence at the thought that tourists looking at street names and road signs in Gaelic will realise the north of Scotland once had a language other than English, albeit largely shared with Ireland. Not that most of us can – or ever did – use it. As a "national" language, it's a con. It's a regional language. I wouldn't say it's "useless", no language is that. But at £1.5m a year, with no clear economic return and little chance of success, it's certainly an expensive irrelevance.'

John O'Groat Journal 15/10/2010

'Wick bar owners claim they were 'misled' over Mod hype'

'WICK publicans claim they have been left in the lurch after preparing themselves for thousands of Mod visitors who never arrived.

After enjoying a busy weekend opening, some argue they lost out when events moved to Thurso.

Blackstairs Lounge owner Ryan Cook claims he was misled about the boost to trade the Gaelic festival would bring, after poor returns during the week left him out of pocket.

He told the John O'Groat Journal: "I don't want to sound like I'm grumbling because I've not made any money.

"If I had broken even then fair play, but to have lost money because of entertainment I put on for the Mod is ridiculous.

"I was told that there were 8000 people coming to the county and we would be running out of room in the pubs. "I feel we've been totally misled by the hype. The message we were getting was that it was going to be a musical celebration with a massive influx of people and that we should all get involved. So that's what we, did to considerable expense, and then there's nobody here."

Mr Cook said he was thankful for the customers he did receive but he felt he had been misinformed by Mod organisers as to the level of preparation he should undertake.

The publican put on entertainment throughout the week including Scots ceilidh band Schiehallion on Tuesday night but was left counting the cost after only an extra two people showed up on top of his regular customers.'

Issues relating to cost and resource

The issues of cost and resource, might be expected to rank highly amongst the ambiguous/negative reportage, and this was indeed found to be the case – ranked 2nd and 1st respectively for 'cost' in terms of priority, with 'resource' (a slightly different category which brings in the issue of choices made between competing possibilities) also high up at 4th and 3rd respectively.

Given its nature, the negative treatment of the 'cost' of Gaelic, ranged widely over many areas of provision, as in Education, (above), but also in relation to Gaelic in the media, the costs of bilingual signage etc, in fact, in relation to the cost of most things where comparisons could be made between the English speaking population and the much smaller Gaelic speaking population.

When reporting falls into the broadly positive camp however, there is a slightly different approach, with 'resource' seen as more important theme than 'cost' – 3rd, 2nd and 3rd in the three categories it encapsulates. 'Cost' is somewhat less important however – ranked 8th by the 'positives', 7th by positive/criticals and 3rd by 'neutrals'.

Negative reporting of the issue of costs:

The report from the Daily Mail below covers many of the common views on Gaelic as a 'high cost' for non-Gaels:

Daily Mail January 7, 2009

'Fury over £250,000 price tag for Gaelic 'Facebook''

'MORE than £250,000 of taxpayers' cash is being spent on setting up a Gaelic version of the Facebook social networking site..... with the recession leaving thousands of Scots facing a bleak financial future, the decision to splash public cash on a site that will be fully understood by only 2 per cent of the population was last night under fire..... existing sites - such as Facebook and MySpace - already have Gaelic users, prompting claims that taxpayers' cash is being wasted on entertainment for the tiny minority who speak the dying language. Mark Wallace, of the TaxPayers' Alliance, said: 'This is yet another example of politicians and public servants becoming desperate to jump on a trendy bandwagon.. This money is urgently needed for serious purposes, like people paying their household bills, and should never have been squandered on such a bizarre project.' The website is just the latest in a line of expensive schemes that sees millions of pounds spent every year promoting Gaelic, which is spoken by around 60,000 people. Last September saw the launch of the £11million-a-year Gaelic TV channel BBC Alba. And ministers agreed to spend £125,000 on Gaelic signs, leaflets and a version of Holyrood's website in the tongue....'

Negative reporting of the issue of resources:

The report from the Press and Journal below covers some of the common views on spending on Gaelic as a wrong decision on resources. Issues such as fixing potholes are seen to be more important..... and the issue of 'Gaelic not being local' also rears its head again.

Press and Journal April 3, 2009

'Union call over bilingual road signs'

THE local government union Unison is calling for a halt to the introduction of bilingual road signs throughout the Highlands because the policy is wasting scarce resources at a time when jobs are under threat.

The union wants Highland Council to carry out a wider-ranging consultation on the controversial issue and to exclude areas where there is no proven demand for Gaelic names.....

Proposer, Alastair Owens, yesterday claimed there was widespread support for a review of the bilingual signs policy.

He said: "There has been a lot of shouting about this in Caithness, but there is equally strong opposition in east coast communities and in Inverness. This is something that is just not wanted in most parts of the Highlands."

Mr Owens, who lives in Inverness, said scarce council resources were being wasted on the new signs at a time when some union members had concerns for their jobs and others faced pay cuts.

"I've been told that no extra money has been allocated to the officials who are looking after the roads," said the retired council roads engineer. "It means that every pound spent on making these bigger signs is a pound less spent on mending potholes." '

Positive reporting of the issue of costs:

Within the articles examined in this study, few examples were found of a cost argument being used to justify spending on Gaelic. In several cases in the West Highland Free Press however, the cost issue was taken head on and in one case the disproportionate effect of proposed cuts were tackled. In another case a plea was made for ensuring that 'every penny counts' in the Gaelic world:

West Highland Free Press 09/04/2010

'As part of its 'everybody must feel the pain' philosophy, Highland has decided to cut GME expenditure. But some warped genius in the council offices has come up with a formula to cut GME more than English-medium education. Instead of simply slicing the same percentage of money from each sector, they have agreed to cut according to teacher pupil ratios.

As Gaelic-medium units are mostly in such medium-sized and small west-coast schools as Sleat and Kilmuir, they will consequently suffer much more than the big English-medium schools of Inverness and Dingwall.

Gaelic-medium education should not be cut at all, of course. It has been one of Highland Council's few success stories. Its achievements should be shouted from the rooftops. It ought to be a flagship of council policy, to be sustained and improved every year. To cut this small jewel in the crown by a penny is bad enough. To cut it more than other areas of education is disgraceful. To have those cuts approved without a single bleat of objection from a Skye councillor is incomprehensible.'

West Highland Free Press 8/10/2010

'Yet there is a grain of truth in all criticism, and while it may be irritating to see Highlanders lampooned by the ignorant it might be our wisdom to pause and ask: Are we sure we are making the best use of the money available for Gaelic? No one will deny the value of Gaelic-medium education or Gaelic broadcasting. But the value of other ventures is not so clear. Do we really need audio guides to the Scottish Parliament? Or the Gaelic versions of the Annual Reports of the said Parliament? Or the range of expensive (and, some would say, incestuous) quangos currently

promoting the language?

This is not a plea for less to be spent on Gaelic. It is a plea to make sure that every penny counts.'

The issue of road or other signage

This is seen as a problem by the ambiguous and negative groups – ranking 3rd and 4th respectively, whereas for the positives and positive but critical groups it is perceived as less important – at 14th and 20th respectively – although it appears 4th in terms of importance, within the 'neutral' group. During the period under study, as well as it being raised from a 'Gaelic not local' angle, the new minister for transport Stewart Steven caused a lot of controversy by claiming that bilingual signage raised issues for road safety in general – a theme that tended to be reported in a neutral manner however.

Negative reporting of the issue of Gaelic or bilingual signage

The extract from the Press and Journal below is a typical example of the 'Gaelic not local' argument, in the words of one of its main proponents, Caithness councillor John Rosie:

Press and Journal 26/6/2009

'Most far north councillors maintain it is not a native language in the county and that there has been insufficient public consultation on a policy which will feature in the council's own Gaelic Plan.

In a stinging attack on the Gaelic agency Bord na Gaidhlig, Thurso Caithness Independent councillor John Rosie said: "I cannot accept in a democratic society an unelected faceless quango, totally unrepresentative of the people of the area, having the right to oppose an alien culture on the people of Caithness. 'The plan is nothing less than Gaelic colonialism – a much neater phrase than mine: a policy that's been forced down the throats of people against their will. "'

Similarly (and also quoting councillor Rosie) The John O'Groat journal linked bilingual policies directly to a use of money that would otherwise have gone to patient care in the NHS:

John O'Groat Journal 19 August, 2009

'Sham claim over Gaelic consultation'

'NHS Highland chiefs are being accused of seeking to bring in a bilingual policy by the back door.

According to Far North Highland councillor John Rosie, the health authority's newly-launched consultation on proposals for the promotion of Gaelic is a sham. And he has hit out at the cost as a misuse of public funds which would otherwise be spent on patient care.....

The draft plan envisages bilingual signs erected outside and inside hospitals and community health centres, and the language being promoted in stationery, vehicle livery, advertising and at public meetings hosted by the board.....

Mr Rosie, a former long-serving member of the health board, yesterday claimed the new policy is unnecessary and unwanted..... Mr Rosie is unconvinced by assurances that the funding of the new policy will not affect services. He said: "They have already spent £80,000 on a consultant to prepare their plan and that is just the very beginning.

'Be in no doubt – there will be a great deal more spent before they are finished and every penny will be siphoned off from funding which could otherwise be spent on patient care. "'

Daily Express August 31, 2010 (Leader)

'Don't force Gaelic on us'

Gradually, parts of the country that have not heard a Gaelic voice in centuries

are being dressed up with Gaelic place names. there is an obsession within government education circles to teach nursery school children the language, whether their parents want this or not. As Scotland becomes more internationally minded due to improved communications, travel and exposure to other cultures, too many in the establishment seem to be trying to force a kind of Gaelic Brigadoon upon us. If people want to learn the Gaelic language and study its culture, let them, but it is time for what's known, in English, as a reality check.

Neutral reporting of the dangers of bilingual road signs

Press and Journal 13/03/2009

'No evidence to suggest they cause road accidents, Highland Council committee told'

'.....In a letter Transport Minister Stewart Stevenson said research found that drivers spent 41% longer reading bilingual road signs, and anecdotal evidence found drivers unfamiliar with an area stopping on trunk roads and carrying out U-turns after misreading signs. But council leader Michael Foxley, a Lochaber GP, said: "The view that your cognition skills are reduced by 41% in terms of reading bilingual signs indicates that you have a serious mental health problem and you're not fit to drive a modern car. If you can't cope with bilingual signs you just need to walk, or the keys should be taken from you and you should be taken home gently. I can't understand why the Scottish Government is making this an issue. The research was done in Wales 30 years ago and they proved then there was no road safety issues connected with bilingual signage which is now rolled out across Wales." Mr Pederson, Inverness South, urged the government to press ahead with the signs on trunk roads throughout the Highlands. He said: "Anecdotal evidence doesn't stand up to scrutiny." '

Issues relating to Bòrd na Gàidhlig

This tends to be less of a matter of contention than some of the other issues above. It is rated as important at 7th in the positive category 4th in the positive but critical and 5th in the neutral category. For the ambiguous group it is a lower concern at 9th and 8th for the negative groups.

Most of the positive reporting is where mention of the Bòrd is part of a factual report of a Gaelic 'outcome' in the press, or where developments within the Bòrd are mentioned – such as appointment of personnel for instance.

Positive reporting of Bòrd na Gàidhlig:

The Herald 21/4/2009

'....the new chairman of Bòrd na Gàidhlig, the body charged with the small matter of saving the Gaelic language.... Earlier this year, however, the Scottish Government confirmed that Cormack, 44, would chair Bòrd na Gàidhlig, the organisation created by the Gaelic Language Act of 2005 to plan Gaelic's revival....'

Press and Journal 14/4/2010

'Gaelic plan aims to save language from dying out'

'AN ORGANISATION which promotes Gaelic culture has published a new action plan to try to stop the ancient language from dying out, it emerged yesterday. Bord na Gaidhlig's development strategy aims to increase the number of people speaking Gaelic in everyday life by improving the way it is taught in primary schools.'

Negative reporting of the Bòrd na Gàidhlig:

This tends to vary, but can range from criticism of a specific action (such as the funding of mygaelic.org), to a general attack on the Bòrd as something that costs 'taxpayers' money, is for a minority interest, and (in for example the view of the [Sunday Express](#) below), is also a 'self interested quango':

Sunday Express 10/10/2010

'Gaelic quango gave GBP 1.5m to groups its own members run'

'MINISTERS have been urged to investigate a Gaelic quango that handed out almost GBP 1.5million in taxpayerfunded grants to organisations linked to its own board members.

The Sunday Express can reveal more than one third of all the public money distributed by Bord na Gaidhlig last year went to other quangos, colleges, councils, festivals and book and TV companies tied to its own senior management team.

As the Royal National Mod gets underway in Caithness this weekend, the revelations have raised concerns about the cosy funding arrangements in the Gaelic-speaking world.

They also prompted senior Scottish Conservative MSP Ted Brocklebank to call for Culture Minister Fiona Hyslop to ensure that public money is being appropriately spent.

Inverness-based Bord na Gaidhlig has seen its annual budget safeguarded by the Scottish Government, despite the looming spending cuts. And it dished out a total of GBP 4.2million in 2009/10, including 36 payments to bodies that are directly linked to one or more of its own board members.....'

Other themes common in the written media:

Issues relating to 'Gaelic unfairly promoted'

This is ranked quite highly by the ambiguous group (5th) and 7th in the negative group. Understandably it does not feature at all in the 'positive' group and is ranked 16th in the concerns of the positive but critical approaches, and slightly higher 11th in the neutral group.

Negative reporting on the theme of 'Gaelic unfairly promoted'

Stirling Observer 4/02/2009

'STIRLING Council is at the centre of a storm over Gaelic education for secondary school pupils.

The Gaelic teacher's post at Wallace High School is currently vacant.

And a Conservative councillor has said plans to transport students elsewhere would be a waste of council and taxpayers' money for a "small minority of people".....

Stirling councillor Neil Benny has spoken out against the option of providing transport for the pupils.

He said: "At a time of stringency in budgets and potential redundancies the fact that the SNP administration is considering spending an extra £50,000 to pay for taxis to Glasgow for one or two children is absurd."

He added that the council's budget for Gaelic education is currently £294,658, which pays for the Gaelic medium education unit at Riverside, the Gaelic nursery and a number of placements to other authorities.

"The way we spend money on Gaelic in this authority is misguided," he said.

"It pays for a tiny minority of Gaelic speakers. Subsidising Gaelic in this way is fundamentally wrong.

"I see no reason why Stirling's hard-pressed taxpayers should continue to have their money poured down the drain by this profligate SNP administration."

Issues relating to the number of Gaelic speakers

This is ranked 5th by the negative group and 12th by the ambiguous group, while those taking a neutral approach, see it ranked 9th as a concern. Interestingly it is higher (10th) in the ranking of the 'positives' who it might be suggested are more positive about this issue than some are negative

Examples of negative reporting of the number of Gaelic speakers:

Aberdeen Evening Express February 24, 2009

'Now's the time to lay our dead lingo to rest'

HOW'S your Gaelic? Non-existent? Join the club of around five million other Scots.

I have two words of the language - slainte and mhor. The fact I use them often says more about my drinking habits than my linguistic skills.

However, Gaelic has now landed on the UN's map of dead languages and there are demands it be helped to survive.

Why put a near-defunct tongue on life support?

Will it enrich our lives, will we suddenly see a flourishing of Gaelic literature? Will we understand it?

Languages are natural things and like all elements of nature they have a lifespan.

Gaelic has run its course. Mourn it, but let it go.'

Examples of positive reporting of the number of Gaelic speakers:

Like much of the positive reporting of Gaelic matters, this tends to take a 'matter of fact' approach:

Scotsman 07/04/2010

'Campaigners aim to have Gaelic used 'in our schools, shops and streets' by 2020' 'SCOTLAND'S largest local authority has promised to end the stigma that causes Gaelic speakers to "feel self-conscious" about using the language. Glasgow City Council yesterday vowed to reverse "centuries of neglect and disparagement", with the aim that within a decade the language will be heard "in our streets and in our shops".

The pledge coincided with the announcement that the University of Glasgow is to create a chair of Gaelic, a move hailed as a "milestone" in Scottish education. The council's Gaelic Language Plan was officially unveiled yesterday at the first board meeting to be held in Glasgow of Bòrd na Gàidhlig, the body set up by the Scottish Government to promote and develop Gaelic. The three-year action plan, which cost £6,000 to produce, includes the opening of a second Gaelic school in the city. Wider use of Gaelic on council signs and in relevant council communication, including forms, press releases and letters, is also planned.

The number of fluent Gaelic speakers nationwide has fallen from 230,000 in 1901 to just 88,000 in 1971 and 58,000 in 2001, according to the most recent census return. In Glasgow, only 2,957 people can speak, read and write the language.'

Section 4 – a short case study of the treatment of ‘Gaelic in the media’

Why is Gaelic in the media important as a topic?

It might have been expected that the issue of Gaelic in the media, could be seen to be a subject of interest given developments with BBC Alba, and this is indeed the case – ranking 6th in terms of coverage with the positives, and positive but criticals, and only slightly behind at 7th place with neutrals. For the ambiguous it ranks 10th and for negatives 6th.

The topic of media is clearly useful to highlight given the controversy as to the role of a ‘traditional’ language such as Gaelic in modern society. The issue of cost and resource is also currently very topical.

This section uses Foucauldian discourse analysis to look in some detail at some of the underlying assumptions underpinning debate in this area.

Why use discourse analysis?

Discourse analysis can shed light on any issue, but it is all the more useful when considering things that are debated or contested. The words used about a person, event, or issue ‘colour’ it with echoes of other people, events or issues, thus imbuing it with connotations that can affect how we evaluate it, positively, negatively, and all the degrees in between.

Michel Foucault refers to the patterns in how things are linguistically constructed as ‘discourses’. He says that there are multiple discourses competing for dominance on any one issue at any one time, and some will win out - and this will change with time. The regularity with which these discourses are reproduced is key, and any discourse that turns up more than once is worthy of note.

Discourses in the media have implications for how issues are considered and understood in wider society, particularly because their appearance in the media gives them a somewhat ‘official’ status, and certainly gives them a wide reach, making it likely that they will feed through into people’s everyday chats with each other about the issue at hand; it works the other way as well of course, with the media picking up on key discourses that people are using in everyday contexts, and media savvy key players attempting to plant positive (for them) discourses in the media and broader discussion. It is a dynamic situation.

In the sample of representations around the Gaelic media issue we have considered, there are **several clear patterns** of competing discourses.

An overarching theme might be seen as contestation over the constructions of Gaelic's boundaries: what its purpose is seen to be, which spaces it should be occupying (literally and metaphorically), and who 'owns' it (again literally and metaphorically) or is responsible for it.

We have grouped these discourses together below with some further comments on how they are played out and contested. It is interesting to note that several of these examples actually display the interplay of several discourses, but where this is the case the primary comment has been given about what we consider to be the key discourse of the piece.

Discourse 1: Gaelic in the Media as a *non-contradictory integration of the ancient and the modern*, versus Gaelic as a *tokenistic symbol of authenticity*

Positive: Non-contradictory integration of ancient and modern

The Herald on 30/3/2009 reports on the launch of mygaelic.com, a Gaelic medium social networking site.

The List 20/7/2009 reports on a new multimedia opera about the birdmen of St Kilda. The following extract pro-actively comments on this integration:
'Originally conceived by a Frenchman, the St Kilda opera throws up all sorts of universal issues to do with tradition vying with globalisation, a loss of cultural diversity and migration of people in a modern world.'

The Scotsman on 22/6/2010 reports that the University of the Highlands and Islands has produced an advert in Gaelic to attract students to its campuses and courses.

The Herald on 13/8/2010 reports on the Gaelic Science Fiction Drama Siubhlachan (The Traveller) and labels it *'accessible and cool'*.

Negative: Gaelic as tokenistic symbol of authenticity

Times 21/8/2009 *'Hollywood searches for Gaelic star'* reports on a Gaelic speaking boy being sought for a new film.

An input from Gordon Maloney, of Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, the Gaelic college on Skye, raises the issue that the importance of linguistic heritage is somewhat undermined if languages are used incorrectly or interchangeably: he *'said that while Pictish and Gaelic belonged to the same family of Celtic languages, they were far from interchangeable. "In the 2nd century they would have been speaking Pictish," he said. "It's about as similar as English is to Spanish. The language spoken then wouldn't be understandable. It would make just as much sense to have them speak English. Historically it would be quite inaccurate."*

Discourse 2: Gaelic language media as a *wide / global concern*, versus Gaelic language media as a *ghetto*

Positive: Gaelic language media as a *wide / global concern*

The Herald on 30/3/2009 reports on the launch of mygaelic.com, a Gaelic medium social networking site. Mike Russell, Minister for Gaelic at the time, is quoted as saying: *"There are members of the Scottish diaspora all over the world, some of whom are Gaelic speakers, some who will be interested in Gaelic language and culture, and some who want to learn Gaelic. This is an invaluable resource with an amazing opportunity to bring together aspiring Gaelic speakers and fluent speakers from home and abroad."*

The Herald on 15/7/2009 reports the BBC Audience Council as saying BBC Alba 'has transformed the broadcasting landscape in Scotland'.

The Daily Record on 1/8/2010 engages with the discussion about Freeview provision of Gaelic (currently TeleG and potentially BBC Alba) and quotes Alan Esslemont, BBC Alba director of operations, at length. Included in what he says is *'There has to be some kind of linguistic ambition to it. What television does for language - and I've seen it both in Wales and Ireland - it adds to the status of the language, puts the language into mainstream and it does this thing that linguistics talk about - normalisation, so that the whole of society begins to look at Gaelic as a normal part of society, and then Gaelic speakers begin to recognise that their language is a normal part of Scottish society.'*

'We want to create content that adds to Gaelic culture, that actually sees that the pinnacle of Gaelic culture may not have been reached. Through television and media we can reach into ways that for a long time was only done through poetry. And also that Scotland sees BBC Alba as adding greatly to their choice. They'll see it as another Scottish choice that is very good at dealing with communities that would naturally be less well served by the market - from grass roots football to professional rugby to traditional music to a whole pile of Scottish stories that haven't been told.'

'I think that's our strength, and we will be successful if we tell Scottish stories that haven't been told.'

This clearly suggests that Gaelic deserves to be placed in a more central position within wider Scottish society than it currently is, and that linguistic 'normalisation' arising from Gaelic programming on Freeview allows / will allow this to happen. Using the metaphorical *'the pinnacle of Gaelic culture may not have been reached'* constructs Gaelic media as dynamic and improving. It also constructs an unproblematic relationship between Gaelic and Scottish 'stories' or identities, something that is problematised elsewhere and thus a site of discourse struggle.

The Scotsman on 6/11/2010 reports that 80% of viewers of BBC Alba are neither Gaelic speakers nor learners and thus it appeals widely.

The Herald on 22/12/2010 in a report about BBC Alba moving to Freeview, says *'The BBC Trust said that for every one Gaelic speaker, the station has so far attracted four*

non-Gaelic speakers, watching the station for an average of more than an hour per week', suggesting that the channel is keen to promote itself as redrawing the boundaries of who engages with Gaelic.

The West Highland Free Press on 24/12/10 also reported on BBC Alba moving to Freeview and said *'an extensive evaluation of the service demonstrated it was drawing in new audiences'.*

Gaelic as wide/global - a negative note:

In a Sunday Times article on 1/2/2009 about falling numbers of viewers of BBC Alba, this reach and eclecticism is positioned instead as wholly negative, with the focus on the extremities of the programming: *'The channel offers an eclectic mix of programmes, some of which appear to have little to do with gaelic culture. Among its early offerings was a documentary on Peter Manuel, the Glasgow serial killer, and a sitcom about the disembodied spirit of Elvis Presley living on the Isle of Lewis.'*

Negative: Gaelic language media as a ghetto

In the Sunday Times on 7/11/2010, Christopher Young, the producer of the Inbetweeners and at that point working on a Gaelic game show for children, states this ghettoisation case explicitly: *'we have a dedicated Gaelic channel, but it's a ghetto. There's no drama and there's no comedy. Unless we produce something as contemporary as EastEnders or Inbetweeners then the language is in danger of dying.'* In a comment piece on the funding of BBC Alba in **Scottish Review on 15/12/2010** we read: *'But by the end of the series all of us who enjoyed 'Machair' had a better understanding of Gaelic Scotland and a warmer sympathy for it. Where would such a brave series be placed now? In the ghetto of BBC Alba, no doubt.'*

This positions BBC Alba as inward looking and suggests quite the opposite to what the coverage by others has suggested: that fewer non-Gaelic speaking viewers will cross the language boundary and tune in to Gaelic television if it is on a dedicated channel than would if it was part of mainstream programming.

Discourse 3: English language media shirking responsibility where Gaelic language media provides, versus Gaelic language media as a threat to English Language programming and viewers / listeners

Positive: English language media shirking responsibility where Gaelic language media provides.

The Scotsman's 'Channel Hopper' on 15/5/2010 has the headline *'Alba plugs gaps left by the big boys'* and reports on BBC Alba showing lower division football matches. It uses language such as *'Alba are steadily acquiring a reputation for innovative programming'* *'their aim of filling the gaps'* and *'complementary programming'*, but makes a clear statement on BBC responsibility: *'But that does not mean that BBC*

Scotland, in particular, should be let off the hook. As a public-service broadcaster, it has a duty to five million people, and cannot shrug off its responsibilities on to a channel whose primary target audience, Gaelic speakers, is of the order of no more than 80,000.

Negative: Gaelic language media as a threat to English Language programming and viewers / listeners

The Scotsman, in a comment piece headlined ‘Gael Farce’ on 11/2/2009, states that The BBC are ‘*pandering to the 55,000 (and rapidly falling) who speak a language utterly foreign to you and me*’. A ‘Gaelic mafia’ discourse is evident here, and using the words ‘pandering’ constructs them as petulant children. The use of exclusive ‘we’ here symbolically excludes Gaelic speakers from the Scotsman’s audience.

The exclusive ‘we’ is present again in a comment piece by Joan McAlpine in **The Sunday Times** on 22/3/2009: ‘*Even those of us who value the Gaelic tradition question why this tiny community is so well served when mainstream Scotland is so neglected.*’

In a comment piece on funding of BBC Alba in **Scottish Review** on 15/12/2010 we read that ‘*29% of BBC Scotland’s total expenditure on TV programmes for Scottish viewers of both languages is devoted to 1.1% of the population (plus any remaining Ayr United supporters). Is this fair? Endangered languages should be supported and there is an overwhelming case for keeping Gaelic alive – it is the vital part of a wonderful culture. But 29%? It does feel like positive discrimination gone mad.*’

The Sun on 22/12/2011 carries a story headlined ‘*13 radio stations axed for Gaelic TV; fury as BBC Alba added to Freeview*’ which positions the channel as only existing to the detriment of something else, not as an entity in itself. In the body of the story we read: ‘*Lib Dem Culture spokesman Iain Smith blasted the move. He said: "The BBC Trust made the wrong decision depriving listeners of radio."*’ This further constructs a power struggle in which non-Gaelic viewers and listeners are being ‘deprived’, which suggests something to which they have a right has been removed from them.

A positive note on the Gaelic’s prominence within the BBC

Brian Wilson’s column in the **West Highland Free Press** on 28/1/11 states ‘*The success of Gaelic speakers within the BBC should be seen as a tribute to the benefits of bilingualism rather than as a threat to anyone else.*’ This is an interesting challenging reproduction of a discourse. This discourse is often used in negative reporting of Gaelic, but the usage here disarms that somewhat by recognizing it, calling it, and challenging it.

Discourse 4: Gaelic language media as politically motivated, versus challenges to Gaelic language media as politically motivated.

Negative: Gaelic language Media as politically motivated

In a **Sunday Times** article on 1/2/2009 entitled ‘*Gaelic TV station loses a third of its viewers*’ we read the following:

'The station, a joint initiative with MG Alba, formerly the Gaelic Media Service, was set up following intense lobbying from politicians and the gaelic community. They claimed the station was needed to support the language after results from the 2001 census showed that the number of gaelic speakers had fallen to an all-time low of 58,650.'

There are echoes of a 'Gaelic Mafia' discourse here, and the use of a lower case 'g' for 'gaelic' lowers its status considerably in this article.

In a story in [The Sunday Times on 19/7/2009](#), the comedian David Mitchell, who has recently discovered Scottish ancestry, criticizes the money being spent on promotion of Gaelic. He says *"I wish Gaelic well and I hope it survives but without absurd levels of politically motivated funding and if it does, it will be all the better for having done so on its own merits as a language and not as a curiosity or nationalistic statement."*

He added: *"By all means let's make Gaelic available to study and learn, let's support those who speak it or want to, but we have to keep it in proportion and not be swayed by nationalist politicians who want to use culture as a political weapon."*

The political motivation suggested here is not a 'Gaelic' mafia, but nationalist politics being set against unionist UK politics.

Positive: Challenges to Gaelic language media as politically motivated

In the [Stornoway Gazette on 28/10/2010](#), on a report about the debate over moving BBC Alba to Freeview, Angus Macneil, SNP MSP for Na h-Eileanan an Iar is quoted as saying *'if the UK government is serious about treating Scotland with respect, they must start by committing to long term support of BBC Alba'*. This fully integrates Scottish and Gaelic identities, something that is problematised elsewhere.

Brian Wilson's column in the [West Highland Free Press on 28/1/11](#) states: *'The Gaelic channel, long fought for, is about the human rights associated with a minority language. The channel needs space to grow and flourish. All of that would be lost if it became subsumed into a politically-motivated "Scottish" channel, promoted by those whose priority is not a uniquely Scottish language but a separately Scottish prism.'*

There is some contestation here of the space Gaelic inhabits, or should inhabit, in that Angus Macneil positions it as central to socio-political Scotland, vying against wider UK powers, whereas Brian Wilson highlights the importance to him of Gaelic being considered as an entity in itself rather than any kind of subsection of Scottishness, and that the latter positioning can be detrimental to it.

Here a political concern is challenged and overridden by claiming there is a more universal concern at stake, that of human rights, and this is reinforced by the use of discourses of nature in the words 'grow and flourish'.

This discourse may have been reproduced from the political sphere. In the [Sunday Times story on 19/7/2009](#) featuring David Mitchell that is discussed in the section above, Michael Russell, the Scottish culture minister at the time, reacts by saying *"Keeping Gaelic alive is really a matter of human rights. I am proud to be part of that effort."*

Discourse 5: Power struggle between Gaelic language media and English language media personified:

Positive: Gaelic language media as the oppressed 'little guy' (and by extension English language media as the empowered 'big guy')

A piece in the [Daily Record on 1/8/2010](#) about Gaelic provision on Freeview (TeleG and BBC Alba), concludes by saying *'The BBC Trust is giving nothing away, although a decision is expected within the next three months.'* This constructs the BBC Trust as more powerful than the Gaelic Broadcasting networks, with the former disallowing access to its information and opinions.

A comment piece about the debate over moving BBC Alba to Freeview in the [West Highland Free Press on 15/10/2010](#) states *'Even while handicapped by broadcasting constraints which mean that only a minority of its potential audience, even in the north-west, can actually tune in, BBC Alba has gained a regular audience of 200,000 people.'* This constructs BBC Alba as being constrained and somewhat disabled by wider society, but succeeding in spite of that.

In the [Stornoway Gazette on 28/10/2010](#), Angus Macneil, SNP MSP for Na h_Eileanan an Iar was quoted as saying *'it is unacceptable that the BBC is being allowed to drag its heels over broadcasting BBC Alba on Freeview'*. The use of this metaphor suggests an entrenchment on the part of the (English language BBC) which by extension suggests a relatively dynamic and growing Gaelic language media.

In a report about BBC Alba moving onto Freeview in [The Herald on 22/12/2010](#), and one in the [West Highland Free Press on 24/12/10](#), Alasdair Allan, the MSP for the Western Isles said BBC Alba was *"acting as a real confidence boost at a critical point in the language's history"*. This suggests that Gaelic language media has previously been positioned as 'the little guy' relatively to English language media, but that Gaelic is now growing in stature and beginning to contest its positioning.

This 'little guy' construction is parodied in a Scottish Review piece about BBC Alba's coverage of lower division football on 15/12/2010: *'There are precious few Ayr United supporters. There are precious few BBC Alba supporters. It is, in its bizarre way, a match made in heaven.'*

Negative: Gaelic personified as not playing by the rules (and by extension less 'official' and lower status than English language media).

[The Scottish Sun](#) carries a story on 2/2/2009 about falling viewing figures of BBC Alba headlined *'Gael farce'*. Using this drama metaphor downplays the status of BBC Alba, constructing it as disorganized and its key players as incompetent. [The Scotsman](#) headlines a comment piece with the same words on 11/2/2009.

The [Scottish Sun](#) story mentioned above quotes historian Michael Fry as saying *'If they're including football, then I think the channel is cheating. The whole thing is being set up to make this channel appear more popular than it is'*.

A story on the same subject in [The Scotsman on 3/2/2009](#) is headlined *'Is it all a game for Alba?'* suggests the station's bosses are not taking the Media Industry seriously. In the body of the story we read *'a surprising engine has been used to rev*

up the viewing figures'. This is the only time in our sample that an engine metaphor is employed, but it is interesting nonetheless in that it would seem to position BBC Alba bosses as youthful and somewhat deviant 'boy racers', inexperienced and trying to beat the system's rules.

A comment piece in [The Independent on 5/5/2009](#) reports that the BBC is against part of the licence fee being used to help fund ITV's local channels, *'But there's plenty of cash splashing about the Beeb it seems – an invitation pings through to a lavish reception in Whitehall this Wednesday to "mark the first six months of BBC Alba, Scotland's Gaelic television channel". Since when was six months an anniversary?'*

The importance of discourse

This section has illustrated that an in-depth discourse analysis of the role of Gaelic in the media can provide a rich seam of contested meanings and competing discourses.

Competing discourses would also be expected to be present in each of the other themes that have emerged within this piece of research, and we suggest that Bòrd na Gàidhlig might wish to consider some additional research in this area at some future time if it wishes to help articulate successful interventions within these current debates.

Section 5 – conclusions

A report covering only two years, and limited to the written media can by its nature offer only a partial snapshot of how Gaelic is treated in the media as a whole.

Clearly there is considerable and apparently growing interest in minority languages and culture within the wider media, as indicated by the almost 1000 'hits' which were uncovered in this research team's first investigation of references to 'Gaelic', 'minority language', 'bilingual education' and 'minority culture' over the 14 month period selected.

Drilling down to the 418 articles which exactly fitted the research parameters during the period, the overall picture is one which can give heart to those who value the benefits of linguistic diversity and Gaelic language and culture in particular.

The wide range of written publications which mentioned Gaelic – 42 in all - shows the spread of interest in the topic, although it is true that a quarter of this media (11 publications), only mentioned Gaelic once in this period.

While a small number of publications provided the bulk of the coverage of Gaelic issues, not all of this media was based within the traditional Gàidhealtachd, although some such as the West Highlands Free Press and the Stornoway Gazette, were. Other press showing a major interest in the subject included publications with an all Scottish standing, such as the Scotsman and to a lesser extent the Herald, thus reflecting a national interest which goes well beyond the 'regional' or 'local'.

Articles within the written press containing positive references to Gaelic outnumbered clearly negative articles by a factor of more than four to one (238:52). When the divisions are simplified into a generally positive (or neutral) approach versus a negative (or ambiguous) approach, the division is over three to one in terms of the number of positive articles printed in the written press in this period (327:91).

In terms of sources of negative articles, only a **very few** consistently negative publications stood out – perhaps the Express stable of newspapers (8 of 9 articles published) being the worst example. Others which regularly published on Gaelic issues, and which had a rather high percentage of clearly negative coverage, such as the John O'Groat Journal (5 of 14 reports), also had positive or neutral coverage (4 instances in this case). Closer examination of the specifics of the John O'Groat Journal might suggest a combination of a very small number of prominent councillors adopting a publicity seeking stance, and a particular combination of events in this period – the implementation of bilingual road signage, and the Mòd going to Caithness led to this polarisation – something which will not necessarily continue in the future.

Similarly with the high percentage of negative articles in the Edinburgh Evening News during this period, it would have been surprising if the financial crisis and the controversy over spending on any minority group (Gaelic Medium Schoolchildren in this case), had not been highlighted by those opposed to Gaelic in general. Interestingly the broadsheet stablemate of the Evening News (the Scotsman), has a much more consistently positive attitude towards the language and the culture, suggesting that the problem may partially lie with the tabloid like nature of evening newspapers, as much as with any long-standing proprietorial position of the newspaper group.

Of some concern in the longer term perhaps is the failure of Gaelic related issues to impact in any meaningful positive way on the radar of Scotland's main tabloids – the Scottish Sun and the Daily Record. This may be an issue the Bòrd may wish to look at in terms of future strategies for popularising Gaelic issues within the popular press.

In terms of recognisable individuals promoting a negative stance towards Gaelic, no contributor of any real weight has emerged in the period under study, although some individuals do appear to use the issue perhaps to be seen as adopting a 'contrarian' approach.

In terms of Gaelic related themes considered as newsworthy by the media in general, approximately twenty-six of those suggested themselves from the research. Tables 4 and 8 above, outlined the most prominent themes held to be positive and negative in the national discussion over Gaelic.

Some themes are less 'contested' than others. In general Gaelic tended to be seen as a positive attribute when individuals were mentioned in the media (52 positives to no negatives). Likewise although there are some clear detractors, Gaelic culture in general gets a positive press (63 positives to 2 negatives), as do specific references to arts, music and poetry (50 to 1 negative).

A current key battleground appears to be that of education, (97 positive to 16 negative references). In terms of ranking in coverage, education ranks top for positives (and positive/ criticals / and neutrals), and top for ambiguous and second for negatives.

This may be a particular area where the Bòrd may wish to concentrate on in terms of an evolving media strategy given the growing role GME will play in any regeneration of the language and culture.

Finally, the short case study provided on Gaelic in the media is of interest in uncovering many of the unstated assumptions and approaches which often underlie discussions of this and other issues relating to Gaelic development.